1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

accorded by the Khasis to the female sex that successive censuses have shown that the women of this race considerably exceed the men in number. According to the census of 1901, there are 1,118 females to every 1,000 male Khasis. This excess, however, is surpassed by that of the Lushais, 1,191 to 1,000, and it may possibly be due to the greater risks to life encountered by the men, who venture far into the plains as traders and porters, while the women stay at home. Habits of intemperance, which are confined to the male sex, may also explain a greater mortality among them.

It would be interesting to investigate the effect on reproduction of the system of matriarchy which governs Khasi family life. The increase of the race is very slow. In the census of 1891 there were enumerated only 117 children under 5 to every hundred married women between 15 and 40, and in 1901 this number fell to 108. It has been suggested that the independence of the wife, and the facilities which exist for divorce, lead to restrictions upon child-bearing, and thus keep the population stationary. The question might with advantage be examined at the census of 1911.

The next characteristic of the Khasis which marks them out for special notice is their method of divination for ascertaining the causes of misfortune and the remedies to be applied. All forms of animistic religion make it their chief business to avert the wrath of the gods, to which calamities of all kinds—sickness, storm, murrain, loss of harvest—are ascribed, by some kind of propitiation; and in this the Khasis are not singular. But it is somewhat surprising to find among them the identical method of *extispicium* which was in use among the Romans, as well as an analogous development in the shape of egg-breaking, fully described by Major Gurdon (p. 221), which seems to have been known to

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THE KHASIS

SECTION I.

HABITAT.

101 162 THE Khasis reside in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district of Assam. They number 176,614 souls, which total is made up of:—

Khasis	167,816
Syntengs	47,868
Christian Khasis	17,135
Khasis inhabiting other districts	4,991
	176,614

131 162 563 The Khasi and Jaintia Hills district is situated between 25° 1' and 26° 5' North Latitude, and between 90° 47' and 92° 52' East Longitude. It contains an area of 6,137 square miles, with a total population at the Census of 1901 of 202,250 souls. In addition to the Khasis there are some members of Bodo tribes inhabiting parts of the district.

The Lyngam tribe appears to have been reckoned in 1901 as Khasi, there being no separate record at the last Census of these people.

101 131 [133] 563 The district is split up into two divisions, the Khasi Hills proper and the Jaintia Hills. The Khasi Hills form the western portion of the district and the Jaintia Hills the eastern. The Khasis inhabit the Khasi Hills proper, and the Syntengs, or Pnars, the Jaintia Hills. The latter hills take their name from the Rajas of Jaintia, the former rulers of this part of the country, who had as their capital Jaintiapur, a place situated at the foot of the Jaintia Hills on the southern side, which now falls within the boundaries of the Sylhet

[P.J

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

plains, jealous of their power, brave in action, and have an aversion to falsehood."

Khasis of the interior who have adopted Christianity are generally cleaner in their persons than the non-Christians, and their women dress better than the latter and have an air of self-respect about them. The houses in a Christian village are also far superior, especially where there are resident European missionaries. Khasis who have become Christians often take to religion with much earnestness (witness the recent religious revival in these hills, which is estimated by the Welsh missionaries to have added between 4,000 and 5,000 converts to Christianity), and are model Sabbatarians, it being a pleasing sight to see men, women, and children trooping to church on a Sunday dressed in their best, and with quite the Sunday expression on their faces one sees in England. It is a pleasure to hear the sound of the distant church bell on the hill-side on a Sunday evening, soon to be succeeded by the beautiful Welsh hymn tunes which, when wafted across the valleys, carry one's thoughts far away. The Welsh missionaries have done, and continue to do, an immense amount of good amongst these people. It would be an evil day for the Khasis if anything should occur to arrest the progress of the mission work in the Khasi Hills.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

The Khasis inhabit the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, although there are a few Khasi settlers in the neighbouring plains districts. The Census Report of 1901 gives the following figures of Khasi residents in the plains:—

Cachar	333
Sylhet	3,083
Goalpara	4
Kamrup	191
Darrang	10
Nowgong	29
Sibsagar	62
Lakhimpur	22
Lushai Hills	21
North Cachar	32
Naga Hills	69

l: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

Garo Hills	117
Manipur	69
Total	4,091*

The following information regarding the general aspect of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district, with some additions, is derived from Sir William Hunter's Statistical Account of Assam. The district consists almost entirely of hills, only a very small portion lying in the plains. The slope of the hills on the southern side is very steep until a table-land is met with at an elevation of about 4,000 feet at Cherrapunji. Higher up there is another plateau at Mawphlang. This is the highest portion of the hills, some villages being found at as high an elevation as close on 6,000 feet above sea level. Fifteen miles to the east of Mawphlang, and in the same range, is situated the civil station of Shillong, at an average elevation of about 4,900 feet. The elevation of the Shillong Peak, the highest hill in the district, is 6,450 feet above sea level. On the northern side of the hills are two plateaux, one between 1,000 and 2,000 feet below the level of Shillong, and another at an elevation of about 2,000 feet above sea level. In general features all these plateaux are much alike, and consist of a succession of undulating downs, broken here and there by the valleys of the larger hill streams. In the higher ranges, where the hills have been denuded of forest, the country is covered with short grass, which becomes longer and more rank in the lower elevations. This denudation of forest has been largely due to the wood being used by the Khasis for fuel for iron smelting in days gone by. The Government, however, has taken steps to protect the remaining forests from further spoliation. A remarkable feature is the presence of numerous sacred groves situated generally just below the brows of the hills. In these woods are to be found principally oak and rhododendron trees. The fir-tree (Pinus Khasia) is first met with on the road from Gauhati to Shillong, at Umsning, at an elevation of about 2,500 feet. In the neighbourhood of Shillong the fir grows profusely, but the finest fir-trees are to be seen

* The figures for Khasi population in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district will be found under "Habitat."

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

SECTION II.

OCCUPATION.

24/ 463 [162] THE greater proportion of the population subsists by cultivation. Cultivation of rice may be divided under two headings, high land or dry cultivation and low land or wet cultivation. The total number of persons who subsist by agriculture generally in the hills, is given in the last Census Report as 154,907, but the term agriculture includes the cultivation of the potato, the orange, betel-nut and *pán*. A full description of the different forms of agriculture will be given under the 463 heading "Agriculture." A considerable number of Khasis earn 482 their livelihood as porters, carrying potatoes to the markets on 439 the Sylhet side of the district, from whence the crop is conveyed by means of country boats to the different places of call of river-steamers in the Surma Valley, the steamers carrying the potatoes to Calcutta. Potatoes are also largely carried to Shillong by porters, where the tuber is readily bought by Marwari merchants, who load it in carts to be conveyed by road to Gauhati, from which station it is again shipped to 482 Calcutta and Upper Assam. Many persons are also employed in 463 carrying rice up the hill from Theria to Cherrapunji, Shillong, [466] and on to other places. Salt is also carried by porters by this route. Many Khasis, both male and female, live by daily labour in this way, earning as much as eight annas, and [162] six annas a day, respectively. The Census Report of 1901 shows some 14,000 "general labourers" in the district, the greater number of whom are porters and coolies, both male [357] and female, employed on road work and on building. In Shillong the Government Offices and the printing press give employment to a certain number of Khasis. There is also a fair demand for Khasi domestic servants, both among the Europeans and the Bengali and Assamese clerks who are employed at the headquarters of the Administration.

I: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

headquarters of the Administration. The manufacture of country spirit gives employment to a considerable number of persons, most of whom are females. At a recent census of the country stills in the district, undertaken by the district officials, the number of stills has been found to be 1,530. There must be at least one person employed at each still, so that the number of distillers is probably not less than 2,000, possibly more. The spirit is distilled both for home consumption and for purposes of sale, in some villages almost entirely for sale. In the Jaintia Hills stock-breeding and dealing in cattle provides occupation for 1,295 people, according to the last census. The cattle are reared in the Jaintia Hills and are driven down to the plains when they reach the age of maturity, where they find a ready market amongst the Sylhetis. Cattle are also driven into Shillong for sale from the Jaintia Hills. Another place for rearing cattle is the Siemship of Nongkhlaw, where there is good pasturage in the neighbourhood of Mairang. These cattle are either sold in Shillong or find their way to the Kamrup district by the old Nongkhlaw road. Cattle-breeding is an industry which is capable of expansion in these hills. There are a few carpenters to be found in Shillong and its neighbourhood. The Khasis are said by Col. Waddell to be unacquainted with the art of weaving; but the fact that a considerable weaving industry exists amongst the Khyrwang villages of the Syntengs, and at Mynso and Suhtnga, has been overlooked by him. The Khyrwangs weave a special pattern of cotton and silk cloth, striped red and white. In Mynso and Suhtnga similar cloths are woven, also the sleeveless coat. In former days this industry is said to have been considerable, but it has been displaced to a large extent of late years by Manchester piece goods. The number of weavers returned at the last census in the district was 533. The Khasis and Mikirs of the low country, or Bhois as they are called, weave cotton cloths which they dye with the leaves of a plant called *u noli*. This is perhaps the wild indigo, or *ram*, of the Shan settlers in the Assam Valley. The weavers are almost always females. An important means of subsistence is road and building work; a considerable number of coolies, both male and female, are employed under Government, practically throughout the year, in

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

been denuded completely of timber, charcoal being necessary for smelting, has affected the production almost as much as the presence of cheap iron in the market. 327

MANUFACTURE OF ERI SILK CLOTHS AND COTTON CLOTHS IN THE JAINTIA HILLS.

The number of weavers in the district at the last Census was 533. This number in the Census Report is ascribed to the cotton industry, no mention being made of weavers of silk. The spinning of Eri silk thread, and weaving it into cloths is, however, a fairly considerable industry amongst the Khyrwang and Nongtung villages of the Jaintia Hills. The Nongtungs and Khyrwangs rear their own Eri worms, and spin the silk from the cocoons. The late Mr. Stack, in his admirable note on silk in Assam, says, "Throughout the whole range of the southern hills, from the Mikir country, Eri thread is in great request for weaving those striped cloths, in which the mountaineers delight," but this observation should have been confined to the Jaintia Hills portion of this district, the Khasis not weaving themselves either in silk or cotton. The Khasis obtain their silk cloths from the Assam Valley, and from the Nongtung or Khyrwang villages in Jaintia. The latter villages have given the name to the striped cloth, *ka jáin Khyrwang*, which is almost invariably worn by the Syntengs. Mr. Stack has given in detail a description of the silk industry in Assam; and it is not therefore necessary to go over the same ground here. The Khyrwang cloth is red and white, mauve and white, or chocolate and white, the cloth being worn by both men and women. The Khyrwang cloths vary in price from Rs. 5 to Rs. 25, according to size and texture. These cloths are the handiwork of women alone, and a woman working every day regularly will take six months to manufacture a cloth valued at Rs. 25; but, as a rule, in the leisurely manner in which they work, it takes a year to complete it. 288 [162] [435] [462]

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

COTTON CLOTHS.

283 In the Jaintia Hills at Mynso cotton is spun into thread, and
288 weaving is carried on there, but on a limited scale. The Mynso people weave the small strips of cloth worn by the men to serve the purpose of the Assamese *lengti* or Hindi *languti*. In Suhtnga the people import cotton thread from Mynso and weave the (*ingki*) or sleeveless coat, peculiar to the district; these coats are dyed red and blue. The dark blue or black dye
824 is obtained from the leaf of a plant called *u sybu*, which
386 Mr. Rita has classified as *strobilanthus hoeditolius*, which
288 grows in the gardens round the homesteads. The leaves are dried, then reduced to powder, mixed with hot water, and the skeins of thread are steeped in the liquid. The colour is permanent. The red dye is obtained from the mixture of the dry bark of two shrubs, *ka lapyndong* (*symplocos racemosa*, Roxb.), and *ka 'larnong* (*morinda-tinctoria*, Roxb.), the latter being the same as the Assamese (আচুকাটে) *áchukáth*. The bark is dried, then pounded, and the two sorts are mixed together and made into a paste with hot water. The skeins are steeped in this mixture for twenty-four hours, then taken out and divided, and again steeped for another twenty-four hours. The Lalungs and Bhois and Lyngams all weave cotton cloths, which are generally dyed blue, sometimes striped blue and red. The Wars weave cotton cloths which are dyed red and yellow, the cloths being woven in checks. Mr. Darrah remarks that the cotton grown in the Jaintia Hills is said to be the best cotton produced in the province. Its thread can be more closely woven than that of other kinds. This statement, however, is not borne out by Mr. Allen writing in 1858, who says that the cotton is of inferior quality, the staple being short and woolly. The cotton cloths woven by the Bhois are called *spua*.

POTTERY.

[162] The Census Report of 1901 gave the number of persons who
323 are supported by the manufacture of pottery at 54 only. Pottery is manufactured at one place only in the Jaintia Hills,

Family Property and Maternal Rights

/127/ by C. Becker S.D.S., Wurzburg

114 The fall of 1910 and the entire following year found the distinguished head of the Ethnographic Museum in Munich, to whom this anniversary volume is dedicated, on a research and collection trip in the extensive and inexhaustible territories of India. He was accompanied by his active wife, who served as his scientific assistant. From Burma, a mine of rich, ethnographic treasure and where the greatest part of their Indian stay was spent, their journey led the research couple into Assam, situated in the northeast of India, a country of equal significance. Assam certainly belongs politically to an-
101 terior India, but forms a bridge to interior India both ethnographically and linguistically.

Among the mountain peoples who inhabit the chain of hills which traverses the length of present-day Assam, and which separates the two largest parts of the country from each other, the Brahmaputra Valley in the north and the Surma Plain in the south, is one of the most interesting and doubtless the most advanced of the tribes, the Khasi, who inhabit the so-called Khasi and Jaintia Mountains. It
[631] was in Shillong, the center of this area, which is now the capital of the country Assam under the English government, where towards the end of September, 1911, I first became acquainted with Professor D. L. Scherman and his wife and where a friendship of many years
133 had its beginning. Therefore this little study will lead us to the Khasi Mountains, to its slopes overgrown with its peculiar pine trees, which receive greetings across the plains from the snow-crowned peaks of the Himalayas, which are flooded by the mighty waves of the Brahmaputra River and the alternating inundations of the Surma River. Here a contented and cheerful little people live who have maintained their own special characteristics in spite of the many European influences and those of neighboring cultures.

162 /128/ Of the entire population of 243,263 people, who form the inhabitants of the Khasi and Jaintai Mountains (1), 203,855 are Khasi.

1. The following statistical estimates are taken from the Census of India 1921, Vol. III, Assam, (Shillong, 1923) pp. I and II.

162
797 Of those, 37,852 have adopted Christianity, while the others are stil adherents of ancient animistic cults, with the exception of somewhat

more than a thousand of them who have been converted to the Hindu religion. 162 (797)

This group of people possesses the possibility of expansion, since they have at their disposal within the area of the Khasi and Jaintia Mountains a territory of 6,022 English square miles, with only 40 persons per square mile. Although wide areas are not built up and the system of shifting fields prevents the full utilization of the land, it is still true that with this small population figure by far the largest part of the whole population (200,781) is dependent on agriculture; trade and manufacturing only play a subordinate part. [311]

With regard to the division of the sexes, the two large religions of Assam, Hinduism and Mohammedanism, show the same proportion as in the rest of India, a lesser number of women than men. But among the Khasi the women are more numerous than the men. In the Brahmaputra valley with its greater Hindu population there are only 892 women for every 1,000 men; in the Surma valley, with a greater Moslem element, there are 937. But the situation is reversed among the Khasi, where there is a surplus of 74 women for every thousand men. The position of the women is basically different among this people. It is based on the customs and usages of maternal rights that prevail among them, which are predominantly based on possession and which find honorable expression in possession. 562 162

1. Property Rights in the Family Property.

The great principle which governs property among the Khasi, is that all family property rests in the hands /128: A/ /Fig. 1. Khasi Girls and Women with their Carrying Baskets. Fig. 2. An Old Clan Mother in the Village Laitumkhra. / /128: B/ /Fig. 3. At the Oracle of Egg Throwing/. Fig. 5. Khasi Girls and Men in Festive Dance Clothing. / /128: C/ /Fig. 4. A Group of Synteng/ /128: D/ Fig. 6. A Holy Grove and Part of the Village Raliang/ /129/ of the women and not of the man. The man can never be the owner of family property, and it can never be transferred to him. He may perhaps acquire some property through his own industry and work, but even that will pass into feminine hands by the path of inheritance. The concept of family is not as narrowly drawn here as in our country. This is a question of the clan-family, the clan. The head of it is always the youngest daughter, who, even when she has become old, bears the honorable name ka barit in the Jaintia Mountains, and in the Khasi Mountains ka khadduh, the last, the youngest. Around her gather her nearest blood relatives, brothers and sisters, and children. For example let 421 613 596 613 596

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

I. Setting and Economic Background of Sohkynduh and Kongton

361 632 [131] Sohkynduh and Kongton are villages of the Kadashinong,[1] one of the areas under the Cherra Chief. The Kadashinong is situated on the southern slope of the Khasi Hills, in what is called War country. These two villages are situated at the farthest point from both Shella, the centre bordered by the plain, and Cherrapunjee, the seat of the Cherra Chief, one of the centres of the upland Khasi Hills. The people at Cherrapunjee say that these villages are one of the most backward parts of the Khasi Hills. They correspond to Rombagiri in the Garo Hills, as they lie in the innermost parts and more traditional economic and social settings have been preserved there than in other villages. These are also the reasons why I selected those villages as my field.

184 121 [171]

361 [131] [487] It is nine miles to Sohkynduh from Cherrapunjee, crossing two deep valleys towards the east. Kongton is located at the heart of the mountain ranges, ten miles from Cherrapunjee, towards the north-east. It is about twelve miles from Sohkynduh to Kongton, and the way leads through one of the most difficult passes, where even villagers seldom travel. In December, 1955, Sohkynduh was a community of 48 households (List 6), and Kongton of 62 households (List 9). The settlements of both villages are clustered in the southern depressions of a mountain, not far from the summit, a typical location of Khasi villages. Sohkynduh has poor soil, covered with plenty of pieces of stones. The yield therefore is very poor. On the other hand, Kongton, a much older village, enjoys fertile soil, and is one of the most prosperous communities in the Kadashinong.

[162] [134]

241 423 [171] [241] The major economy of both villages is shifting cultivation. We have already seen, in the chapters on the Garo, the fundamental technique of "Jhuming cultivation." The differences between the Garo and the Khasi shifting cultivation are to be found in two aspects: one is the nature of the crops and the other is the type of landownership. In this area, the main crop is millet, while that of the Garo is rice. Besides the shifting cultivation, the Khasi have pan-leaf gardens and sometimes pineapple gardens, though on a small scale and not in every household. The most important feature of Khasi shifting cultivation is the development of private ownership. In the tribal areas in Assam, such private ownership of the jhum field is quite an

1. Kadashinong is the name of a group of villages. Its literal meaning is "twelve villages," and it comprises the following villages: Sohkynduh, Rymmai, Mawbawein, Mawshiut, Mawmang, Kongton, Shyntiang, Krohiawhiar, Pdei, Tenshun, Nongpriang, and Diengsaw. (Khasi spelling follows the customary usage in Cherra State.)

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

177 people remained non-Hindu in their basic beliefs and social customs. Hindu
648 influences are nevertheless predominant in their culture, especially in their way
771 of living which shows a practical adaptability, somewhat similar to the Japanese
795 acceptance of modern western culture without becoming Christian. In my census of Shella village, the people calling themselves 'Hindu' amount to 40 per
[797] cent of the total, but they are the recent converts to the Ramakrishna School
[162] which established a missionary station at Shella after the Partition. The Christians constitute 30 per cent of the total, most of them having been converted during the last ten years, as in the case of the Ramachrishna School.[1]
[458] The rest remain as they were, of Khasi belief. These conversions to either Ramachrishna or Christianity seem to have been encouraged by the unstable situation of the people resulting from the recent economic depression in this area.

439 The Partition of India and Pakistan in August 1947, which drew the bor-
458 derline a few miles south of Shella village, considerably upset village economy by stopping all trade with Bengal, though a limited amount of trade is allowed
648 with local people at the border. Because of this political change, all the produce of Shella gardens is rotting away for lack of markets, while all of the rice fields were taken by Pakistan. Goods now come to Shella only from the uplands, carried upon men's shoulders over the most difficult pass, which makes everything very expensive. Many families have sold their gold and other treasures, and some families are facing starvation.[2]

182 Concerning the conversion to a new religion, an interesting phenomenon
171 is to be observed. The conversion to Christianity or to Ramakrishna is mostly by individual: I found in my census that the wife and husband often belong to
592 different religions. This is a very different picture from the Garo, among whom
613 I always found that the husband and wife belonged to the same religion: the conversion of the husband to Christianity was always followed by that of the
771 wife. I think this reflects the structural differences which influence the actual relationship between the husband and wife. Among these Khasi, instead of
795 the husband and wife, the maternal uncle and his nephews and nieces are mostly of the same religion. The function of the *iing*, the most important social and religious unit, thus appears also in the conversion to a new religion, stronger than that of a domestic unit.

Intermarriage.

648 The close economic and cultural contact of the Shella people and the Bengalee
771 is not matched by social contact. The essential barrier between the two peoples is the difference of religion which dominates the entire social order in each
563 society. Though these Khasi were important traders, richer than the neighbouring Hindu peasants, they were considered by the Hindu as outcasts with whom they never shared social activities. Intermarriages were therefore very rare. In Shella village, only two exceptional cases were found in my census:

1. A Khasi woman married to a Gurka (cattle-keeper); they live at Shella Bazaar (Sholap).
2. A Khasi woman has marital relation with a Bengalee medical doctor who has resided at Disong in Shella for six years. He already has a Bengalee

1. These two entirely different missionary activities are competing with each other, and are somewhat related to the political powers within this area.
2. The state government is doing its best to provide them with additional facilities: for example, providing air transport for the transportation of oranges from Shella to Gauhati and Calcutta. However, such arrangements cannot cover the great economic loss suffered by the Shella people.

group of matrilineal and Mon-Khmer-speaking people who claim as their ancestral homeland the present-day United Khasi–Jaintia Hills District (within approximately 90° 47′ and 92° 52′ E. and 25° 5′ and 26° 5′ N.). This group includes the Jaintias (also Pnar or Synteng) in the southeast, who differ from the Khasis primarily in their duolocal residence pattern and less virulent forms of sorcery. (The Hadem in eastern Jaintia are a Kuki people.) It also includes the Lyngngams (also spelled Lynngam) in the west, who practice migratory swidden agriculture and certain peculiar funerary rites, and are said by Ehrenfels (1955) to be culturally intermediate between Khasis and Garos. Finally, it includes Bhois, Wars, and upland Khasis, which terms are primarily territorial. Bhoi country is the north-central part of the District, and is culturally complicated by the presence of Mikirs, Lalungs, and Nepalis. War country spans the entire southern length of the District, so that Wars divide into Jaintia Wars and Khasi Wars; of these, the Khasi Wars have traditionally transmitted property to sons as well as to daughters. The upland center of the District is the country of the Khasis proper, those whose culture provides the most useful model for interpreting the variations found elsewhere. [For general reference on all categories of Khasi culture, cf. Costa 1936 and 1937; also Gurdon 1907, especially for data on regional variations.] **Geography.** The District is 5,554 square miles of hilly tableland, intricately dissected by numerous rivers, and marked by significant ecological variation over very short distances. The tablelands step gently downward north from Shillong Peak, which at 6,445 feet is the highest point in the District, and over about 55 miles ease into the Brahmaputra valley where this is some 250 feet above sea level. To the south, the land slopes more steeply downward for about 20 miles, and then drops abruptly, in cliff and steep-slope formations, to the Ganges sea-level delta that begins at its north with Sylhet. The annual southwest monsoons drop torrential rains around Cherrapunji and Mawsynram villages (for Cherrapunji, a record 805 inches in 1861), but then, reaching Shillong 33 miles to the northeast, provide only about 100 inches per year. Rainfall is again greater in Bhoi, which shares the Brahmaputra valley climate. Climate is temperate on the high Shillong plateau, where it seldom freezes and never snows. To the north, climate becomes subtropical, forest is jungly, and fauna abound. The climate to the south is also subtropical. [Cf. Hooker 1891: chap. XXIX.] **Linguistic affiliation.** Khasi is one of the major Mon-Khmer languages, related to Mon, Khmer, Semang-Sakai, Nicobarese, and Palaung-Wa. The major Khasi dialects are Khasi, Jaintia, and Lyngngam, to which Grierson adds War. Further minor variations occur from village to village. The Khasis had no script until 1842, when the roman alphabet was successfully applied to the Cherrapunji dialect of Khasi proper. [Cf. Rabel 1961; Grierson 1903-28: 2; Bareh 1962.]

101 131 197 101 184 162 563 59 155 24 764 014 [428] [113] 133 [131] 132 [113] 197 [212] [113]

also active, and in that decade one U Kyrhai, a Khasi convert to Presbyterianism, left that church and founded a unique sect that blends something of himself with something of mystical Hinduism and Christianity. The competitors who most seriously threatened the dominance of the Welsh Presbyterians were the Roman Catholic missionaries who arrived in Shillong about 1890. Catholics have since opened a number of high schools, colleges, convents, and orphanages. They also established a technical school, and are now constructing a seminary. At the present time, one estimate is that there are about 100,000 Presbyterians and 80,000 Roman Catholics among Khasis. Members of other Christian sects are comparatively few; adherents to Hinduism and Islam are fewer still, comprised chiefly of Khasi women married to Hindu or Muslim men; U Kyrhai's sect is dying out; and the balance of Khasis are, according to their own term, "Khasi" in religion. [Cf. Lyngdoh 1937; Morris 1910; Ropmay 1940; Singh 1950; Pugh 1951.] Supernaturals. The great deities are two, an unnamed masculine God (U Blei) and an unnamed feminine Goddess (Ka Blei Nongsynshar Nonghukum). God created the earth, and in the beginning instructed man in cultivation techniques and also laid down the framework of a moral order that should guide his every move if he wished to join God in heaven after death. This framework was then filled in by the first ancestors, who are therefore the authorities on the subject and are semideified as Ka Iawbei (the mother), U Thawlang (the father), and U Suidñia (the mother's brother). Very early, Goddess undertook to keep account of the numbers of human beings on earth, and this role was so important, relating as it did to the health and the multiplication of the people, that she became of major importance in the Khasi pantheon. When sin beset human society, God activated automatic punishments in the form of natural calamities, and man finally decided that some animal should go and intercede with God on behalf of humans. The cock went, agreed to take upon himself the burden of human sin, and received instruction in the correct divinatory and sacrificial techniques for which he would be one of the main objects of the knife. Again, over a period of time, it was the ancestors who perfected these techniques. Now, God is regarded as powerful and merciful, but passive. His punishments have their own impetus, and the expression of His mercy is solidified in ritual. Goddess is more vaguely conceived, but is much closer to the individual. [But cf. Ehrenfels 1950, who conceives of one double-sexed, great deity among Khasis.] Regarding ancestors, it is never clear from prayers whether supplication is to generalized semideities or to particular first ancestors of a Khasi's own matrilineage, and such a distinction seems not to matter. There are three other categories of minor deities: those who protect places (such as villages, groves, or springs),

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[For the composition of population by social groupings, see category 116, pp. 29-52, 62-64, 75-76, 81-84, 106-123, 127-129, and 149-152.]

and even the well to do ones do not feel anything to work as labourers in other's farms. It is almost customary among the agriculturists to work in other's farms on wage basis, when agricultural operation in one's own farm are over. This is probably an outcome of the difficult transport situation. Among the non-agriculturists and those who follow agriculture as subsidiary occupation, a large number are porters and labourers engaged in jobs like transporting of goods from place to place, collection of limestone, sand, fuel, etc. Collieries and forests of the district also offer employment to a good number of people. Since the taking up of road programme under the plan, a large number of people are getting employment in construction of roads, etc. It is heartening to note that for construction of roads, nay for all kinds of works demanding unskilled labourers, the district locally supplies the whole labour force. People in the various local points of the district, particularly those living in higher hills are mainly engaged in trade. The Khasis are indefatigable traders and have been able to keep almost the whole of the small trade in the district in their own hands. A small proportion of the people are engaged in cottage industries such as stone cutting, brick making, bee keeping, blacksmithy, cane and bamboo works, etc.

The number of persons returned in the 1951 census under each of the eight main livelihood classes for the rural tract of the district was as follows.

TABLE 1

Number of Persons (Source 1951 Census)

Head	Male	Female	Total	P.C.
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
A. Agricultural class:—				
1. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependents.	90,603	92,107	1,82,710	59·89
2. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned and their dependents.	16,014	16,109	32,123	10·53
3. Cultivating labourers and their dependents.	14,053	14,941	28,994	9·50
4. Non-cultivating owners of land, agricultural rent receivers and their dependents.	344	562	906	·30
Sub-total	1,21,014	1,23,719	2,44,733	80·22
B. Non-agricultural class:—				
5. Production other than cultivation.	11,791	10,309	22,103	7·24
6. Commerce	3,237	4,069	7,306	2·39
7. Transport	355	264	619	·20
8. Other services and miscellaneous sources.	17,462	12,864	30,326	9.95
Sub-total	32,848	27,506	60,354	19.780
Total		..	3,05,087	100.00

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7

public auction. The Assam rules, as revised in 1875-76, reserve to Government the right of pre-emption at the price of Rs. 600 (£60) in the case of every elephant captured between 6 feet and 7½ feet in height. For every elephant caught that is not purchased by Government, a royalty of Rs. 100 (£10) is payable within one month after capture. Certain methods of hunting are prohibited.

POPULATION.—Prior to 1872 no attempts had been made at a Census of the Khásí and Jáintiá Hills, but in 1870 the Deputy-Commissioner approximately estimated the population at 118,925 souls. In 1872, at the time of the Bengal Census, operations were set on foot in these Hills, but on a less elaborate system than in Regulation Districts. In the Khásí Hills, the Census of the various petty States was effected through the chiefs; in British territory in the Jáintiá Hills, the *dollois* conducted the enumeration; while at Shillong and other places under direct administration, the work was done by officers attached to the Deputy-Commissioner's office. The results are thus returned:—Adults—males, 39,882; and females, 44,298: total adults, 84,280. Children under twelve years of age—males, 28,611; and females, 28,947: total children, 57,558. Total males, 68,593; total females, 73,245. Grand total, 141,838; proportion of males, 48·36 per cent. The total area of the District, according to the latest returns, is 6157 square miles, which gives an average density of 23 persons per square mile. The number of villages is 1003; the number of houses, 30,557, of which 350 are returned as of the better sort.

ETHNICAL DIVISION OF THE PEOPLE.—The population consists almost exclusively of aboriginal tribes and races, viz. Khásiás and Syntengs (who form the bulk of the inhabitants of the Khásí and Jáintiá Hills respectively), Mikirs, Gáros, and Kukis. The only other dwellers in the Hills are the European officials and military officers at Shillong and Cherrá Púnjí, with their native servants and followers, a few Bengálí officials, and the sepoys of a regiment of native infantry. The classification of the inhabitants according to religion shows:—141,283 aborigines; 365 Hindus; 62 Muhammadans; and 128 Christians, including 33 Europeans, 8 Eurasians, and 85 native converts.

THE KHASIAS.—The following sketch of the physical characteristics and customs of the Khásiás has been kindly furnished to me by the Deputy-Commissioner, Colonel Bivar; it is reproduced almost verbatim from his report and on his authority:—